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'84 Classmates Receive Distinguished Alumnus Awards in Dual Ceremony

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Article By: Barbara Honegger

Wednesday, December 31, 2008



Two graduates of the Naval Postgraduate School December 1984 class were honored with Distinguished Alumnus Awards in a dual ceremony in the Barbara McNitt Ballroom, Dec. 19. NPS President Daniel Oliver presented the back-to-back awards to Chief of Naval Personnel and Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (Manpower, Personnel, Training and Education) Vice Adm. Mark E. Ferguson III and U.S. Army North (Fifth Army) Commanding General Lt. Gen. Thomas R. Turner.

Ferguson had just delivered the keynote address at the Fall 2008 graduation ceremonies, and Turner flew in from Fort Sam Houston to support his Army North graduate, retired Air Force Lt. Col. Vincent Sharp, who earned a Master of Arts in Homeland Security. Both alums graduated with distinction-Ferguson with a master's degree in computer science and Turner with a master's in systems technology (command, control and communications)-but had never met until returning to their alma mater two and a half decades later.

A surface warfare officer, Ferguson graduated with distinction from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1978. In addition to his degree from NPS, he completed a National Security Fellowship at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and is a graduate of the Air Command and Staff College. Assuming duties as the Navy's 55th personnel chief on April 16, 2006, Ferguson oversees planning and programming for all Navy manpower, personnel, training and education resources; budgeting for Navy personnel; development of systems to manage total force manpower, personnel training and education resources; and assignment of all Navy personnel. His previous Flag

Officer assignments include Chief of Legislative Affairs and Assistant Commander for Distribution (PERS-4) at the Navy Personnel Command. Ferguson's previous awards include the Navy Distinguished Service Medal, the Defense Superior Service Medal, the Legion of Merit and the Defense Meritorious Service Medal.

A 1974 graduate of the U.S. Military Academy commissioned as an Infantry second lieutenant, Turner assumed responsibilities as head of Army North, the army command under NORTHCOM created in the wake of Sept. 11, in Dec. 2006. After attending NPS and the Armed Forces Staff College, he served in numerous command positions including as Assistant to the Commander, 75th Ranger Regiment, in Operation Just Cause in Panama. He was Commander, United Nations Command Security Force, Joint Security Area, Paumunjom, in Korea before attending the U.S. Army War College, after which he assumed command of 2nd Brigade, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, at Fort Bragg in 1993.

Three years later, Turner attended the Royal College of Defense Studies in London, where he served as a British Defense College Fellow and was subsequently named Executive Assistant to the Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Atlantic Command and Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic in Norfolk, Va. Turner also served as Assistant Division Commander for Maneuver of the 1st Infantry Division, U.S. Army Europe and 7th Army, Bamberg, Germany. In Aug. 2001, Turner became Deputy U.S. Military Representative to the NATO Military Committee in Brussels. He assumed command of U.S. Army Southern European Task Force (Airborne) in Nov. 2002 and was deployed as Commander of Joint Task Force Liberia. Turner became Commanding General of 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) at Fort Campbell during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Turner's previous awards include the Distinguished Service Medal, Defense Superior Service Medal with two oak leaf clusters, the Legion of Merit with three oak leaf clusters, the Bronze Star Medal, the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal with two oak leaf clusters, the Joint Service Commendation Medal, the Army Achievement Medal with oak leaf cluster and the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal.

"This is a total surprise. I only learned this morning," Turner said following the ceremony. "The Naval Postgraduate School is a wonderful learning environment and a great opportunity to meet and interact with members of all the other services, Defense Department civilians and international officers. I only wish I'd known Admiral Ferguson while we were here. It took us almost 25 years to finally meet, and this was a great way to do it."

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